



COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL POLICY

Remarks

The Honorable Jim DeMint
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SENATOR DEMINT: I see so many faces here in the room who have had my back over the last several years as I have waded into some pretty big fights, with my own leadership sometimes and all across the country, but I see you here and I want to thank you. This reminds me of the collective power of the Conservative Movement and the possibilities that we have. I remember when I was a freshman congressman, I was elected in 1998, my chief of staff and scheduler were in my office going through things that I had been invited to and I had just come from the business world, never been in politics. I had no idea what CNP was and they just said I had been invited to go to some function in D.C. for CNP and I told them I didn't want anything else to do at night, I just want to go to the gym or something. My chief of staff stopped and said "It is not an option. This is the premier conservative group in the country -- you have to go to this." Ever since, every time I am invited to a CNP, I am going. If I have to cancel my daughter's wedding to come out, I'm here for you.

A lot of people wonder why I would leave the United States Senate and the ranking Member on the powerful Commerce Committee to go to The Heritage Foundation. Why would I leave the most debilitating body in the world to join you as leaders of the freedom movement in our country? Why would I do that? I think the answer is pretty obvious -- that the President and this Congress are not going to solve our problems. They are our problems. We have to take control of our ideas, of our principles, our message and take them to the American people in a way that wins their hearts and minds so that we can change Washington. That is the only way we can turn things around. That is why I wanted to be on your side rather than on the political side because that is how we are going to change America. Ed Feulner and, I along with a lot of The Heritage team, have finished our President's tour, about twelve major cities. We have been all over the country; thousands of people have come out. It has been really encouraging. They were discouraged when they came, but we talked about how we could pull together dozens and dozens of conservative groups and build a strong coalition, grassroots network, and work with Heritage Action. That is a group that now wants to support a lot of what you do around the country and pull people together. By the time we got through talking to them they left with hope. What they want is leadership. That is what people want all over the country. They want champions who will stand up with bold ideas and not be so afraid of what might happen if they stand up for the right principles.

America is still ready, just like they were in 2010, to fight. They just want good leadership and that is what all of you are doing in the room today. They need champions. And speaking of champions, did any of you have a chance to see Rand Paul on C-SPAN a few days ago? To see Rand and then Ted Cruz and Mike Lee rush down there to help as soon as he gained control of the floor and then as it went on more and more Senators joined him and after a while you could see the House conservatives standing behind him, and I was so inspired. If you know any history

with some of these guys you know I was sitting there like a father watching his son score the winning touchdown. I was just so proud of these guys. And it reminds us that one person can inspire millions of people and that we as a Conservative Movement if we are ready to stand for bold ideas, convey a clear vision we can change the course of our country. And I think that is why you are all here today. After the election, a number of you were in that group I think, a lot of conservative leaders in Washington asked me to come and speak to their group about where the conservative movement would go from here. What should conservatives do? My message was simple. Buy guns, gold, and canned goods is what it was. I think some of you might have remembered that. But our situation is a little like a boxer who has been knocked down multiple times in the third round, just barely got up in time not to be counted out by the referee. Was about to be knocked down again when the bell rung and the round was over. He was saved by the bell, stumbled to his corner, collapsed on his stool and the manger whispered in his ear, "You've got him right where you want him." That is where you are today. Today, I am the manager and you are the boxer and I want to talk about why and how we've got President Obama and the liberal progressive movement right where we want them.

To understand where we are we need to make the distinction between the Republican Party and the conservative movement. The Republican Party has not advanced, at least at the national level, a conservative agenda for almost twenty years. Since 1994 in the Republican Revolution when a great new group of folks came in and they passed welfare reform and put the country on a course to a balanced budget but by the time I got there in 1998 all of that had pretty much disappeared. They were working on distributing earmarks and redistricting and getting folks to raise money to save their positions. Spending had already gotten out of control. Two years later President Bush was elected, we continued to expand government with No Child Left Behind and Medicare Part D. A few years later, I was elected to the Senate. We had large majorities in the Senate and the House and still a Republican President in The White House. We grew government, earmarks reached ten thousand a year, the debt continued to expand, we created new federal programs. You know, Bush ended his term with the big bailouts and Obama's first year with the trillion-dollar stimulus and the continuation of one bailout after another. America had finally had enough. I mean we lost the majority in 2006 in the House and the Senate. We lost the presidency in 2008. After that, America, frustrated with bailouts, spending, debt, many of them took to the streets, a lot of us were part of that. They changed the conversation. Really America was united around some common limited government principles - stopping the spending and the debt and the borrowing. What about the Constitution? In 2010 we saw really an amazing election, amazing change, but Republicans didn't win the majority in the House of Representatives or gain those seats. I know because I was out across the country. I had become so discouraged that I went outside the party, started to support candidates that the party was against -- by the way, there was no way Pat Toomey could win in Pennsylvania or Marco Rubio in Florida. Rand Paul didn't have a chance. Mike Lee running against a sitting incumbent Republican, none of them had a chance. But the people made a different decision and they sent a whole new group to Washington and if you notice who the leaders are in Washington now the

ones who inspire you and make you want to stand up the only ones really who won in 2012 in that terrible election good conservatives senators like Ted Cruz and Jeff Flake who came in the door and changed things. But it showed me what we have to do to win this battle. I will use the example of earmarks for instance. It was clear that this was destroying the whole purpose of the Congress from being one that focused on our country and the nation itself to parochial interest and it was just a matter of dividing up the candy to get people to vote for bad bills.

That is mostly what we did. It was the whole point of having seniority to divide up the candy. And you couldn't convince our leaders -- Republicans or Democrats to change. As a matter of fact, 2008 after we had a disastrous election, Obama was elected, I proposed a rules change that banned earmarks in a Republican conference knowing if we did then the Democrats would have to. Seventy percent of Americans supported banning earmarks but I got four votes and a lot of lectures. I wouldn't support a candidate through Senate Conservative Fund or other things we were doing that would not support a ban on earmarks and a lot of your groups were the same way. Heritage was the same way. And every new senator that walked in in 2010 I think except for one had run on banning earmarks. This was a stand that helped them politically because seventy percent of Americans believed it. And groups like Heritage and Americans Against Government Waste, probably every group in this room had helped to cultivate the public support for that idea so that it became an asset to support it. But they walked through the door in 2010 and the first thing we did in the Republican conference was pass a rules change that banned earmarks and they have been banned since then. The first thing we did after that was started talking about how we balanced the budget. And we can learn from that a really important fact that I learned the hard way being inside Congress a long time. We can take the best policies and ideas to lawmakers on The Hill and that is a good thing and we need to do it but unless we cultivate those ideas and get support for them on the outside an all across America, you are not going to see republicans or anyone else embrace those ideas because they can't win elections if they embrace ideas that the people don't support.

That is our job and that is why I came to Heritage and that is why I want to work with you. It is not only to keep developing the best policies backed by the best research in the world but to take that message, take control of our message our conservative principles and ideas and take them directly to the American people. We can do things that people say are impossible if we do that. But what we want to do at Heritage is what we call the American perception project. It is understanding. In my years of advertising and marketing, it is one thing to have the best ideas, the best products and the best services but if people don't perceive it that way then it doesn't make any difference what you say. And America doesn't perceive conservatism as being best for their lives. They certainly don't perceive the Republican Party as being the party that cares about them. We can argue the facts all we want but perception is reality. And we have to recognize that. We have to figure out how to get Americans to embrace the ideas that will make their lives better and their country stronger. We as conservatives are for 100% of Americans whether they vote for us or not we want every American to have the chance to reach the ladder of opportunity and climb as high as they can dream. That is what we are about and we need to

make sure that Americans know that we want what is best for them and that the ideas that we are talking about will make their lives better, their futures brighter and our country stronger. We know that is true but we haven't been able to convince Americans of that. And that is why we have to change what we are doing.

We cannot stand on the outside looking in hoping republicans will advance our cause. It is time we take control of our message and take it to the American people. We are going to figure out how people express what they want, what they care about and we are going to figure out how to connect the ideas that make their life better with what they understand makes their lives better. And we want to share that information and that communication material with every group here, every coalition group that wants to work with us. We are going to set up permanent panels of people from all walks of life all across the country in all demographic groups that we can constantly go to to find out how they are responding to issues that are going on in Washington. How do we express the thing in a way that makes sense to them. Every week we can take that information to you and every partner across the country and say this is how people understand what we are talking about. This is how we can change the way they perceive what we are talking about here is how we can win the battle. What that will do is what the earmark issue did for the candidates in 2010. If the issue is developed and cultivated and positive among the voters the candidates will embrace them and run on them and promote them and they will win elections because they are doing that. We need to do that across the board. We need to talk about limited government but we need to help people understand how that makes their opportunity unlimited. We have to figure out how to express that. We want to do that along with telling the American success stories that America doesn't know enough about. We don't have to guess whether our ideas or policies work for people. They are working all over the country. We had a miserable national election in 2012 but conservatives won more governorships and legislatures than any time in history. We have got governors implementing our ideas eliminating their income tax and seeing businesses come to their states. States like Texas passed tort reform and doctors moved there. States like Pennsylvania and North Dakota start developing their own energy and they see their economy boom, jobs created, lives transformed. We see education choice changing people's lives. Even Juan Williams in the Washington Post supports school choice because he saw the videos of children talking about how their lives had been changed when they got out of a failing school into a school that was succeeding. We don't have to just show people policies we can show the faces and let them hear the voices of the lives that have been changed. We can also go to places where liberal progressive policies have been in place for years. Why don't we take the cameras to downtown Detroit? There hasn't been a conservative there in over fifty years. Look what happens when Obama's policies are implemented over time. The population is about a third of what it was fifty years ago. There are over four hundred liquor stores in Detroit but not one chain supermarket. Only seven percent of eighth graders read at the eighth-grade level, unemployment for Hispanics and African Americans at forty percent. You can go on and on. The violence, compare it with a city or a state that is adopting our policies and America will begin to see what is best for their lives. We have got to tell those American success stories and help people see

that if they want happiness, if they want success, if they want a brighter future they have to vote for it. When they vote for it they have to vote for the ideas that make these things happen.

We've got to connect these dots for people and we've got to do it in a hurry. I think we have two years to stop the bleeding and we have four years to turn our country around. That is why I decided not to spend my last four years in the Senate and to come to The Heritage Foundation, join them and join you in taking our country back. I honestly believe we have them right where we want them and I'm glad I am there with you.

Thank you very much.